

[Youngstown Vindicator](#)

January 16, 2011

We welcomed Christopher Briem's Jan. 9 op-ed. "An artificial separation" in which he presented a long list of good reasons why the Pittsburgh-Youngstown-Cleveland region should work more closely together for economic gain. Together, we have excellent universities, 30 Fortune 1000 companies, many emerging industries, unparalleled hospitals and research centers, and many residents. All of these strengths and more make us a formidable global competitor.

In fact, a formal collaboration is now in its fourth year, created as a result of leadership provided by U.S. Reps. Jason Altmire, D-McCandless, and Tim Ryan, D-Niles. The goal of the TechBelt Initiative is to establish the region as a global center for public and private investment, research and manufacturing. The stakeholders that began to engage in this effort recognized that we can build on a strong base of life sciences and energy sector related companies to leverage the region's unique and high-value assets.

We also believe in supporting other strong efforts to tie the region. The Regional Learning Network has been formed to share best practices in community redevelopment. Combined we are focused on both community and economic development.

Essentially, the TechBelt Initiative seeks to be the force that creates a brain gain for this area in the 21st century. The TechBelt steering committee is made up of the region's key economic development agencies, including the Allegheny Conference, Youngstown/Warren Regional Chamber, and the Greater Cleveland Partnership. It includes many of the technology-focused investment organizations, including BioEnterprise, the Pittsburgh LifeSciences Greenhouse, NorTech, Innovation Works, and Jumpstart. And it includes our great universities, including Youngstown State, Pittsburgh, Case Western Reserve, Carnegie Mellon, Kent and Akron.

Universities, businesses and nonprofits are working together, hosting meetings to explore opportunities and seeking funding for joint projects.

Cleveland, Youngstown, Pittsburgh and the surrounding region need to continue to encourage and grow this effort. Our future is brighter if we all join forces for job growth and economic expansion.

- Carol Caruso, Eric Planey and DeWitt Peart, members of the TechBelt Executive Committee

Caruso is Senior VP-Advocacy, Greater Cleveland Partnership; Planey is Vice-President, International Business Attraction, Youngstown/Warren Regional Chamber, and Peart is Executive Vice President, Allegheny Conference on Community Development and Affiliates.